United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2309

February 1, 2011

Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke Undersecretary for Intellectual Property and Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office David Kappos Department of Commerce 445 12th Street, SW Washington, DC 20554

Dear Secretary Locke and Undersecretary Kappos:

As the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) considers expanding into satellite offices around the country, I write to urge your consideration of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota for your next regional office.

The Twin Cities are home to leading research institutions, including the nationally ranked University of Minnesota, as well as a number of innovative corporations, including 3M, Xcel Energy, Medtronic, IBM, and the Mayo Clinic, a leader in health care research. According to a 2010 report by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, Minnesota had the 9th highest number of patents in the United States. The Twin Cities also contains one of the most qualified and educated workforces in the country, which includes a large number of scientists and engineers that could make a valuable contribution to a USPTO office. St. Paul is sometimes called "the most livable city in America," and Forbes included Minnesota in its top five states for quality of life. The Twin Cities are a great place to live and work, and I believe that will also help draw in additional qualified patent examiners to the region.

A satellite office located in the Twin Cities would be a great asset to Minnesota's innovators and entrepreneurs. An additional satellite office could greatly reduce the USPTO's backlog of more than 700,000 patent applications, and it would help ensure that Minnesota businesses have the resources they need to create new jobs and fuel economic growth in the region.

I sincerely hope that you will strongly consider the Twin Cities for your next Regional Patent Office. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me or Susan Rohol in my office at 202-224-5641.

Sincerely,

Al Franken

United States Senator

Vanken